

KEY SPOUSE PROGRAM



Key Spouse Mentor Reference Guide

Sept 2013

Learning Objectives

- Describe the Key Spouse Mentor (KSM) role and responsibilities
- Discuss the KSM working relationships
- Describe confidentiality guidelines

Topic Outline

- Introduction
- KSM Role
- The KS Role Is Not
- KSM Responsibilities
- Unit Team Goals
- Unit Team Roles
- Confidentiality Guidelines
- Summary

INTRODUCTION

The Unit Commander (CC) is responsible for establishing and supporting the unit readiness programs. Ideally, family readiness is managed from the top, and Commanders have unit family readiness performance goals they must meet. Clearly, they can't meet those goals alone; they must identify capable spouse leadership and delegate clear responsibilities and the authority that goes with them to the spouse volunteers.

It is also recommended that leadership spouses attend KS training, preferably with their unit KS. This training provides important guidelines and direction in assisting the KS, as well as the requirements of confidentiality.

The secret to positive KS team relationships is to establish clearly defined roles, maintain good communication, and to reiterate these guidelines each time a new member is added to the team.

KEY SPOUSE MENTOR ROLE

If the CC chooses to appoint a KSM, he or she may choose whomever they feel is most qualified for the position. The KSM acts an advocate and supports KS initiatives. Because of implied experience, the KSM is a valuable asset to KSs.

KSMs are encouraged to attend KS training. Even if the KSM has attended KS training at a previous installation, there is value in attending at the current installation as every assignment is unique.

Additionally, a KSM may:

- Serve as KS sounding board
- Attend KS training
- Attend wing/group/unit KS meetings
- Lead KS meetings
- Advocate unit KS concern
- Ensure family issues and concerns are a priority
- Maintain a strategic rather than tactical perspective

To maintain confidentiality and objectivity, the KSM **is not**:

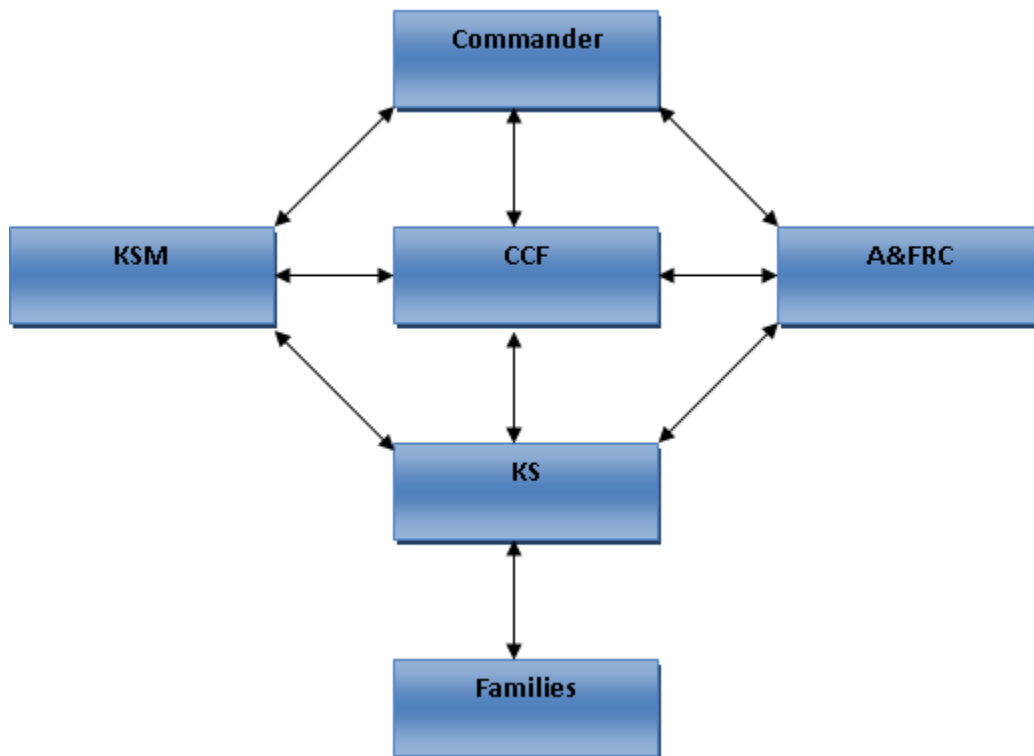
- A caller on the phone tree
- Unit social planner (the person in this position may be a social planner in the role of senior leader spouse).
- Casualty responder

If a military spouse chooses to help and support the family of a deceased service member, they must separate their roles of KSM and friend. They may assist as a concerned spouse or compassionate friend; however, this must not be acted upon in their role as a KSM or KS.

KEY SPOUSE MENTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Advocate for base and unit family readiness programs
- Encourage KSs as appropriate by supporting their efforts
- Share knowledge and experience where necessary
- Promote KS recruitment and recognition
- Suggest qualified spouses for appointment
- Leverage KSM, Air Force and KS network experience

KSMs may support KS meetings through regular attendance at other base level meetings that provide the strategic perspective a mentor can bring to the team...(e.g., pre-deployment briefs, families of deployed events, return and reunion briefs, newcomers briefings, Town Hall meetings, Parent Advisory Boards, AAFES/DECA, Club meetings, CC calls, etc.).

Diagram 1: Key Spouse Network

Unit Team Goal

The Air Force promotes initiatives that build resilient families. Well-informed families are strong families, and that strength contributes to the success of unit readiness. Members of the unit, as well as supporting agencies, contribute to family readiness.

While the CC may choose the level of involvement each member or supporting agency will have, the KSs have the specific purpose of serving as the communication link between the chain of command and the families.

The CCF helps further the Commander's intent in regard to unit family readiness and encourages unit members and their families to proactively use base resource programs. Enlisting their assistance will help assure information flow to ALL Airmen and their families.

Unit Team Roles

The roles of the unit KS team and their working relationships are as follows:

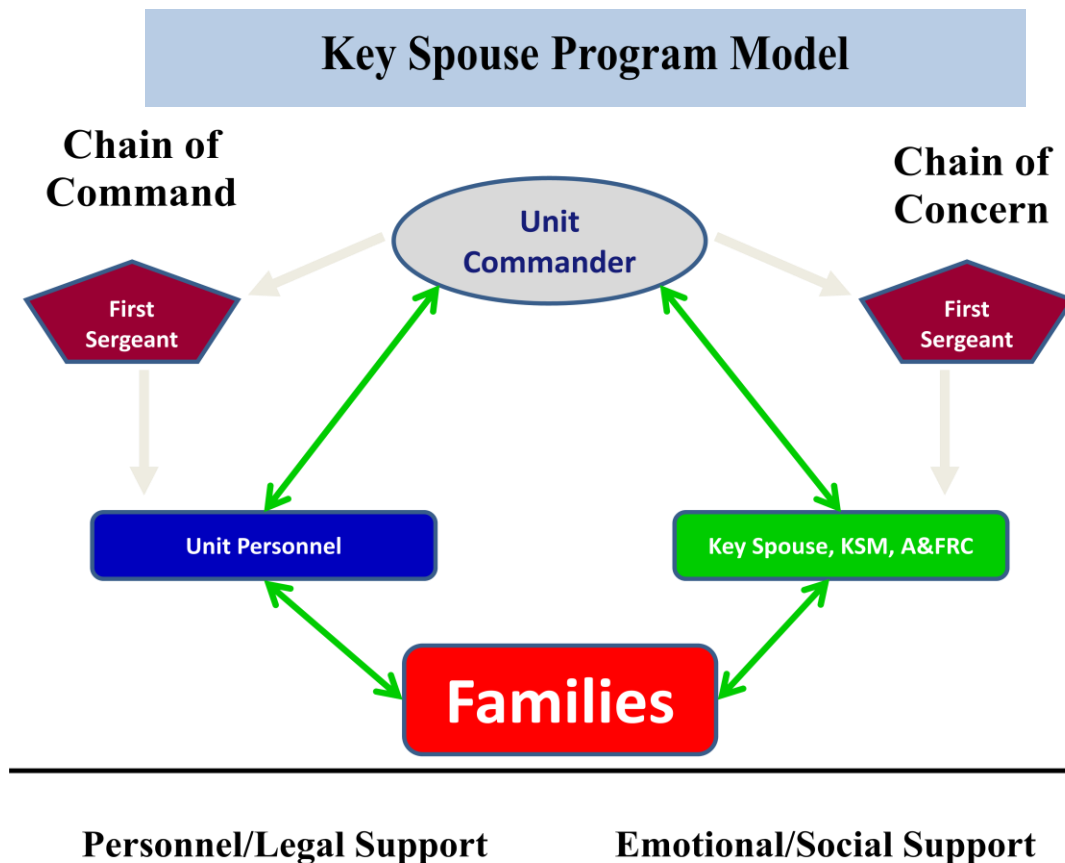
Commander (CC) – The CC establishes and maintains the unit's KS program.

First Sergeant (CCF) – The CCF helps further the Commander's intent in regard to unit family Readiness and serves as an advocate for family readiness by serving as the link between the CC and the KS.

Key Spouse (KS) – The KS provides unit families with timely and accurate information and resource referral services.

Key Spouse Mentor (KSM) –The KSM is an optional position within the unit network and is an advocate for the program and a KS mentor, providing support, encouragement and leadership.

The program functions within a military framework and must be sensitive to chain of command/chain of communication issues. The CC has complete control, and the KSM's job is to provide support for the KS. The relationship developed between the CC, CCF, A&FRC, KSs, and the KSM is very important as it can either further or impede the unit family readiness program.

Diagram 2: Team Communication

CONFIDENTIALITY GUIDELINES

The Privacy Act of 1974 limits access to personal information Airmen provide to their command. The information the command collects must be relevant and necessary to accomplish the mission. KSs may receive personal information protected by the Privacy Act because they are appointed volunteer liaisons between family members and the command who need this information to perform their duties. When providing these official services, Key Spouse volunteers are, IAW 10 USC 1588, considered to be employees of the Federal Government for purposes of the Privacy Act (see 10 USC 588(d)(C)). As a result, giving them access to Privacy Act information (rosters) is

not a prohibited disclosure so long as the disclosure is in connection with the performance of their volunteer services as Key Spouses.

Key Spouses will disclose personal information about Airmen and their families only to the CC or the CCF. If the KS is experiencing a particular issue with a family or spouse, this should only be discussed with the CC or CCF and not with other KSs within the unit. If the KS confides in the KSM for situational advice and encouragement, KSMs caution KSs to avoid disclosing unnecessary information by emphasizing situations rather than names.

Don't disclose any information that may have adverse impact on the mission such as personal or Operational Security (OPSEC) information.

Outside agencies may attempt to contact KSMs to try to obtain information. If this occurs, refer the outside agency to the CC, CCF, or Public Affairs Office.

SUMMARY

The KSM is a valued member of the unit's team, and may/may not be the Commander's spouse. As a force multiplier, the KSM advocates unit concerns and encourages spouse interactions with each other and the unit.